

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

It gives me much pleasure in presenting this very timely and important report. This investigation is part of a broader project being undertaken by the Public Service Commission (PSC) on the monitoring and evaluation of affirmative action policies in the South African Public Service, an initiative made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation (USA).

The fruition of this report stems from various initiatives both within and outside of the PSC. A special word of thanks and appreciation needs to be expressed to Commissioner Maria Rantho, the Convenor of the HR Specialist Team within the PSC for advocating for this particular project. The advice and guidance that she proffered to the research team have been invaluable for the completion of the study. It should also be mentioned that the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration and the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Children, Youth and Disabled Persons, to which the PSC made a preliminary presentation on the status of disability equity last year, also awaits this report, to inform it on progress with disability equity.

In reading this report you will be struck by the limited progress that has been made in enhancing the status and representativeness of the people with disabilities in the public service. In 2002, with a figure of 0,25% it is evident that if the current pace continues the target of ensuring a 2% representation of persons with disability in the South African Public Service by 2005 will not be met. Although there are variations in performance between and within national departments and provincial administrations, the overall picture calls for urgent intervention by policy makers and implementers alike. The uneven nature of resource allocation, stemming from previous discriminatory legislation, compounds the problem. It is not surprising therefore that African women with disabilities are the worst represented in the public service.

It should be pointed out that increasing the representativeness of people with disabilities in the public service, albeit important, is not an end in itself. It must be accompanied by genuine empowerment. It is also about giving effect to some of our constitutional ideals. If we talk about South African society as being one that promotes diversity, embraces difference, and that is also caring and nurturing, it is important that such values are reflected in the workplace. Having people with disabilities within the public service indicates this commitment. It also sharpens the awareness that able-bodied employees have of their own fortune, and fosters an appreciation for the difficulties and adversities of others. It promotes the collective psyche of all to be more tolerant, appreciative and caring.

In conclusion I wish to place on record the thanks and appreciation of the PSC to the various sectors and persons who have contributed to the completion of this project. It became clear that there is genuineness by all parties to improve the representation of people with disabilities in the public service. This imbues me with confidence that the discussions emanating from this report will contribute towards action for attainment of the 2005 target.

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